

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2010

SAVE THE DATE

IRAN RIGHTS EXPERTS TO DISCUSS

“Religious Freedom and Human Rights Violations in Iran: Opportunity for Accountability”

Tuesday, May 25, 2010, 9:00 – 10:30 am

Zenger Room, National Press Club

Since Iran’s disputed June 12, 2009 presidential elections, human rights and religious freedom conditions have deteriorated to a point not seen since the early days of the Islamic revolution. Religious minorities—including Baha’is, various Christian groups, Sufi and Sunni Muslims, Zoroastrians, and Jews—are suffering increasing persecution and imprisonment while killings, arrests, and physical abuse have intensified for reformers, ethnic minorities, journalists, human rights defenders, women’s groups, and other activists. Religious as well as political dissidents are often tried on trumped-up national security crimes and other criminal charges of blasphemy, propaganda against the regime, and criticizing the Islamic Republic.

On June 10, two days before the one-year anniversary of the 2009 elections, the international community will have the opportunity to scrutinize Iran’s human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC) in Geneva. The review provides an opportunity for the United States and other member states to press for a resolution at the UN HRC condemning Iran’s severe human rights violations and to raise awareness and demand the release of prisoners of conscience.

To discuss these and related issues, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is holding a press conference including **Roxana Saberi**, the Iranian-American journalist arrested in Iran in January 2009 on bogus espionage charges and sentenced to eight years in prison. During her 100 days in prison, Ms. Saberi shared a cell with other prisoners of conscience, including two female Baha’i religious leaders who have been incarcerated for two years on several baseless capital charges. Ms. Saberi’s new book “Between Two Worlds: My Life and Captivity in Iran” documents her experiences in Iran and provides the reader with a glimpse of Iran’s notorious Evin prison.

Also speaking will be **Hadi Ghaemi**, an internationally recognized Iran analyst and human rights expert. Mr. Ghaemi is executive director of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran and the co-founder of United4Iran.com, a non-partisan global network of Iranian and non-Iranian activists working to promote fundamental human rights in Iran. Joining by Skype from London will be

Maziar Bahari, an Iranian-Canadian *Newsweek* journalist, who spent four months in an Iranian prison after the June 2009 elections and was

eventually released in October after international appeals. Just this month, Mr. Bahari was tried and sentenced to 13 years in prison and 74 lashes in absentia, including on unsubstantiated charges of insulting the Supreme Leader and the President and “propaganda against the regime.”

Commissioner **Nina Shea** will discuss USCIRF’s latest findings on Iran and present key policy recommendations for the United States and international community.

Title: “Religious Freedom and Human Rights in Iran: Opportunity for Accountability”

Event Date: May 25, 2010

Event Type: Press Conference

Time: 9:00 AM

Sponsored by: U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

Event Location: Zenger Room, National Press Club, 529 14th St. NW, 13th Floor - Washington, DC 20045

Details: Roxana Saberi, Hadi Ghaemi, Maziar Bahari, and Commissioner Nina Shea talk about human rights and religious freedom conditions in Iran

Contact/Reservations: Anu Narasimhan, (540) 230-6670, mnarasimhan@uscirf.gov